A Gainful Death the end of a truly Christian Life.

A

SERMON

At the FUNERAL of

Mr. *John Griffith*,

Late Minister of the Gospel,

Who departed this Life *May* 16. in the 79*th* year of his Age.

Preach'd *May* the 20*th* 1700.

By *RICHARD ALLEN.*

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BRITISH MUSEUM

TO THE READER.

I Have no other Excuſe to plead for expoſing the following Sermon, but the common one, that it was not by my own choice, but thro the earneſt, and often repeated Importunities of the deareſt Relatives of that Worthy Perſon, at whoſe Interment it was preach'd.

'Tis impoſſible I ſhould commit it to the Preſs verbatim *as then deliver'd. But tho ſeveral Expreſſions then uſed may have eſcaped my Recollection; yet the ſubſtance from my own brief Notes and Memory is here tranſmitted, with ſome little Additions.*

The Subject is undoubtedly excellent: had my Abilities in handling it been ſomewhat proportionable, I

ſhould hope the advantage would well compenſate the ſmall Coſt and Labour of the peruſal.

Such as it is I commit it to publick View: If God pleaſe, by his Bleſſing, to make it in ſome meaſure uſeful to promote a Chriſtian Life, *and a* gainful Death, *in any into whoſe hands it ſhall come; let ſuch be excited to give the greater Glory to God, from the Conſideration of the meanneſs of the Inſtrument.*

R. A.

Phil.

Phil. i. 21.

For to me to live is Chriſt, and to die is gain.

AS I thought ſtrange when Application was made to me, ſo I doubt not but ſeveral here may wonder that I ſhould be ingaged in a Funeral Diſcourſe at the Interment of this antient and worthy Miniſter of the Goſpel: Such I would inform that it was nothing but the earneſt Solicitations of his deareſt Friends and Relations, together with the venerable Eſteem I had for *himſelf*, that prevailed with me.

And having conſented, I had many thoughts what Text to make the foundation of my preſent Diſcourſe; but being aſſured that theſe excellent words of the Apoſtle were a very great Support and

Solace to the Mind of this Reverend Perſon in the approaches of his Diſſolution, and often repeated by him with much delight but few hours before his laſt *Exit*, I concluded none more fit to be conſider'd upon this ſolemn occaſion; and the rather becauſe they are the words of one to whom I will venture to liken (tho in vaſtly different degrees) this our deceaſed Friend, *viz.* an antient faithful Miniſter of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the great Apoſtle *Paul*, who was now a Priſoner at *Rome*, and under the apprehenſions of a ſudden Diſſolution, not indeed (as our antient Friend) through the Infirmities of Age and Sickneſs, but as a Martyr of Jeſus Chriſt; which Apprehenſions were ſo far from being *frightful* and *ſurprizing*, that they were very *comfortable* and *delightful* to him, as appears *v.* 20. The ground of which holy Confidence and fearleſs Expectation of Death,

Death, was his *conſciouſneſs* that Chriſt was his *Life*, and that therefore Death would be his *Gain*, as it is expreſſed in my Text; *For to me to live is Chriſt, and to die is Gain.*

In which words we have two *Generals.*

Firſt, The Apoſtle in himſelf gives us a *Deſcription* of a living Chriſtian in theſe words, *For to me to live is Chriſt*; or as *Tremellius* (from the *Syriac*) and others render it, * *For Chriſt is my Life*, underſtanding that the Apoſtle uſeth the Infinitive † *to live*, for the Noun || *Life*; which is very uſual both in Scripture and other Authors: and being thus underſtood, the words contain this Propoſition;

* Vita enim mea Chriſtus eſt.

† τὸ ζῆν.

|| ὁ ζωή.

That Chriſt is the Life of a true Chriſtian; as *Col.* 3. 4. *When Chriſt who is our Life ſhall appear*, &c.

Secondly, The happy *Exit* of ſuch a one. He that can ſay upon clear grounds with the Apoſtle, That *Chriſt is his Life*, may aſſure himſelf that *Death* will be ſo far from being the King of *Terrors*, that it will be *Gain* to him.

Doct. *All thoſe, and only thoſe, who have Chriſt for their Life, ſhall be Gainers by their Death.*

In handling this Truth, I ſhall endeavour two things.

I. To ſhew what's included in *Chriſt's being the Life of a true Chriſtian.*
II. What are the *Advantages* that ſuch gain by their Death.

I. The firſt thing we ſhall enquire is, What may be included in Chriſt's being the Life of a true Chriſtian, that thereby we may make ſome *Judgment* of our own State.

State. I conceive it includes theſe *following things*, which I may little more than *glance* at.

1. *Chriſt is the meritorious Cauſe of a true Chriſtian's Life.* We are all thro Sin *dead in Law*, and under *Condemnation*; but a true Chriſtian is paſſed from this State of Death and Condemnation, into that of Juſtification and Life. But how? *Being juſtified freely by his Grace, through the Redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt.* Rom. 3. 24. 'Tis thro the *meritorious* Sufferings and Obedience of the Lord Jeſus imputed to Believers, in reſpect of the ſaving Benefits thereof. By Sin all are *alienated from the Life of God*; but the true Chriſtian is rais'd up from a *Death of Sin*, to a *Life of ſincere Holineſs.* But how? 'tis by the gracious *operation* of the Spirit of God, *which he ſhed on us abundantly, through Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour.* Tit. 3. 6.

2. *Chriſt is the Principle of the Spiritual Life of a true Chriſtian, which*

which ſprings from Union with him. 'Tis a dangerous Error for any to ſuppoſe themſelves to live a Life of *Juſtification*, before they have ſome real experience of a Life of *Sanctification*; and 'tis impoſſible to live a Life of Sanctification before this vital *Union*. *I live*, ſays the Apoſtle, *yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me; and the Life which I now live in the fleſh I live by the Faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himſelf for me.*

Gal. 2. 20.

3. *The Laws of Chriſt are the governing Rule of the true Chriſtian's Life.* If we *ſavingly* receive Chriſt, we receive him as *Lord*, Col. 2. 6. *i. e.* We as willingly receive him as our *King* to rule and govern us, and to ſave us from the Power and Dominion of Sin at preſent, and from Sin it ſelf hereafter, as we receive him for our great *High Prieſt* to atone for our Guilt, and procure and maintain our Peace with God by his Sacrifice and Interceſſion.

ceſſion. *Chriſt is the* ſole *Author of eternal Salvation*, but 'tis only *to them that obey him.* Heb. 5. 9.

4. *The Love of Chriſt is the conſtraining Motive of a true Chriſtian's Life.* None can upon clear grounds ſay with the Apoſtle, *To me to die is Gain*, but ſuch as can, in ſome good meaſure, alſo ſay, *The Love of Chriſt conſtraineth us.* 2 Cor. 5. 14. *The Crown of Righteouſneſs is promiſed to all them*, and to them only 2 Tim. 4. 8. *who love his appearing:* And to be ſure, none can love Chriſt's appearing but ſuch as can truly ſay, *We love him, becauſe he firſt loved us.* 1 Joh. 4. 19.

5. *Chriſt is the Pattern and Exemplar of a true Chriſtian's Life.* God hath *predeſtinated* all his Children *to be conformed to the Image of his Son*, both in Grace and Holineſs here, and in Glory and Happineſs hereafter: And the *former* is the only and neceſſary way and means to the *latter.* 'Tis vain for us to pretend to be ſavingly intereſted Rom. 8. 29.

tereſted in Chriſt, unleſs, in ſome good meaſure, we are like him in Holineſs, Humility, Meekneſs, Self-denial, Zeal for the Divine Glo-

1 Joh. 2. 6. ry, &c. *He that ſaith he abideth in*

* ὀφείλει, *him*, * muſt needs *himſelf alſo ſo*

1 Cor. 5. 10. *walk, even as he walked.*

Laſtly, *The Glory, Honour and Intereſt of Chriſt is the great End of a true Chriſtian's Life.* He does not only ſometimes *ſpeak* or *act* for

2 Cor. 5. 15. Chriſt, but habitually *lives to him.*

V. 15—18. Our Apoſtle tells us here, he *rejoic'd* while *Chriſt was preached* and glorified, and his Intereſt carried on, tho himſelf was, by the ſame Perſons, *envied* and deſpiſed. We muſt in this be *like* him, and hereby evidence that *Chriſt is our Life*, if we would ſay upon like grounds with him, *Death will be our Gain.*

Theſe are brief *hints* of the *ſeverals* I take to be included in this Phraſe, *To me to live is Chriſt*, or *Chriſt is my Life*; which taken together,

gether, I conceive, give us an excellent Deſcription of a true living Chriſtian. *He is one that, through the meritorious Sufferings and Obedience of the Lord Jeſus, is vitally united to him by Faith, and thereby juſtified and ſanctified; rul'd by his Laws, and influenc'd by his Love; his Life is conform'd to Chriſt's Life, and devoted to the advancement of his Glory and Intereſt.* To all ſuch, and ſuch only, *Death will be Gain.* And ſo I come to the

II. General, to treat ſomething of the *Advantage that every true living Chriſtian gains by Death.* This we ſhall conſider more *generally*, and more *particularly.*

I would in a more general way premiſe two things:

1. *Every true living Chriſtian is a preſent and immediate Gainer by Death.* When their *Body* returns to the Earth, *their Spirit* happily *returns to God who gave it.* Hence Eccleſ. 12. 7.

heaven-

heavenly-minded Christians earnestly long to be *absent from the Body, that they may be present with the Lord.* Without presupposing this, I can't see what rational Account can be given of the Apostle's *Option*, ver. 23. *Having a desire to depart*, or * to be dissolv'd, *and be with Christ.* Which Truth I think also plainly taught by our Saviour, in his gracious Promise to the petitioning Malefactor, *Verily I say to thee, To day*, or † this very day, *thou shalt be with me in Paradise*; that is, *in heavenly Delights and Pleasures.* Who also teaches all his faithful Servants by his own Example, *to commend their expiring Spirits into the hands of their Heavenly Father.*

2 Cor. 5. 8.

* εἰς τὸ ἀναλῦσαι.

Luke 23. 43.

† σήμερον, hodie, q.d. hoc die. *Pasor.*

Ib. *ver.* 46.

But, 2. *The fulness and completion of their Gain by Death is reserv'd for the glorious Appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ.* When the Bodies of Saints shall be *rais'd* and *reunited* to their Souls, then they

they ſhall *fully* enter into the Joy of their Lord. Hence this is conſtantly ſpoken of as the *great* day of Redemption and Recompence. 'Tis *when Chriſt who is our Life ſhall appear*, that we ſhall fully *appear with him in Glory: When he ſhall come to be* moſt eminently *glorified in his Saints, and admir'd in all them that believe.* Whence all that have valiantly and victoriouſly *fought the good fight*, &c. die in a comfortable hope of receiving *a Crown of Righteouſneſs at that day, viz.* of his appearing. Thus much in general. Col. 3. 4. 2 Theſſ. 1. 10. 2 Tim. 4. 7, 8.

I ſhall now more particularly endeavour to ſet before you ſomething of the Advantages which living Chriſtians gain by Death. And,

1. They gain thereby *a perfect freedom from all Sin.* I need not prove to any ſerious Chriſtian that this is a very *great Gain.* Believers are indeed now characteriz'd to be ſuch

Rom.6.22. ſuch as are *made free from Sin*; but this means no otherwiſe than as the Apoſtle afterwards explains him-
—— 8.2. ſelf, *made free from the Law*, or Dominion *of Sin*. An abſolutely perfect freedom from Sin, is peculiar to the *future* Life. The remains of this Plague in Believers,
Lev. 14. like that inveterate *Leproſy* in the Houſes of *Iſraelites*, can't be per-
2 Cor.5.1. fectly cur'd without *diſſolving this earthly Houſe of their Tabernacle*. Chriſt will at and after Death compleat his Work, and preſent his Church, and each living Member
Eph.5.27. thereof, *glorious, not having ſpot or wrinkle, or any ſuch thing, but holy, and without blemiſh*: Then they
Rev.14.5. ſhall be *without fault before the Throne of God*.

2. They are freed by it not only from all Sin, but *from all Temptations and Inclinations to Sin*. This is much more than the former. Our firſt Parents in Innocency were wholly free from *Sin*, but

'tis

'tis certain they were not free from *Temptations* to Sin: Yea the ſecond *Adam*, our Lord Jeſus, tho perfectly *holy and undefil'd*, yet, in the ſtate of his Humiliation, he was not only aſſaulted with Temptations, but *violently* aſſaulted with moſt *black* and *helliſh* ones; and tho he could not in the leaſt be prevailed upon *to ſin* by theſe Temptations, yet he *ſuffered*, which Heb. 2.18. ſeems to import ſome *difficulty*, in bearing and reſiſting of them; no wonder then that the beſt Chriſtians very often find themſelves *grievouſly* tempted, and too much *inclin'd* to a ſinful compliance, when yet through Grace they are kept from thoſe *Sins* to which they are tempted. But Death will free the ſincere Chriſtian not only from the deſtructive malignity of *the fiery Darts of the* Eph. 6.16. *wicked one*, but alſo from their *afflictive Injections*; not only from being *overcome* by thoſe *fleſhly Luſts* 1 Pet. 2.11.

which war againſt their Souls, but alſo from being any more *moleſted* by the motion of them. Death will not only ſecure them from
Gal. 1. 4. being *deſtroyed* by *this preſent evil World*, but it will *totally deliver* them from it.

In this reſpect Death will uſher the living Chriſtian into a Life tranſcendently more excellent than the preſent Life of *Grace*, wherein whatever ground Chriſtians have
1 Cor. 10. 12. to *think themſelves to ſtand*, or * to be eſtabliſhed, they muſt ſtill *take*
* ἑστάναι, 2 Cor. 13. 1. *heed leſt they fall.* And ſure the moſt confirm'd Chriſtian, while here, as well as the great *Apoſtle*, has need to maintain a *cautionary*
1 Cor. 9. 27. Fear and Endeavour, *leſt he ſhould*
† ἀδόκιμος γένωμαι. *be*, or † become a Reprobate or *Caſtaway.*

Yea Death will advance the living Chriſtian into a tranſcendently better Life than that *paradiſical* one of our firſt Parents in Innocency, as was hinted before: For tho

tho they were free from *Sin*, and furniſh'd with Strength and Ability to have *continued* in that State, yet they were not freed from the *poſſibility* and *danger* of ſinning, as the event wofully manifeſted. But Believers thro Death will be ſecur'd not only from *Sin*, but from *all danger of ſinning*, and eſtabliſh'd in an *impeccable* and immutable ſtate of Holineſs.

3. *Death will free the living Chriſtian from all Sorrows and Miſeries.* They are already exempted by their *Juſtification* from liableneſs to *future Wrath* and Condemnation: *God hath not appointed them to Wrath, but to obtain Salvation thro our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* 1 Theſſ. 5. 9. But while they have any remains of Sin, they muſt look for Sorrows and Afflictions, which are the inſeparable *Concomitants* of it. *Job's* Experience is as true of the beſt Chriſtians, as of other Men, that as they are *of few days* in this

World, ſo thoſe few days are *full of trouble.* How many Sorrows afflict ſome thro *want* and *penury*; and no leſs Sorrows attend others in obtaining and uſing of *Riches*; and a while after it may be far greater accoſt them by the ſudden *loſs* of an Eſtate, or great part of it, by ſome *ſurprizing* Cala-
Prov. 23. 5. mity; while *Riches make themſelves Wings and fly away, as an Eagle towards Heaven.* Many times they have great Sorrows from the Malignity of open *Enemies*, at other times no leſs from the Treachery of pretended *Friends*, and the Mutability and Ficklenes of once real ones. The dear Children of God here labour often under Sorrows by reaſon of *Pains*, and dolorous Diſtempers in their *Bodies*, and many times by reaſon of *Doubts* and Fears in their *Minds:* They have many times Heart-breaking Sorrows from the woful *Miſcarriages* of Children, or other dear

dear Relations; and often very cutting Sorrows by a ſudden *removal* of them thro a ſurprizing ſtroke of Death. It would be endleſs to enumerate the variety of Sorrows and Calamities that more or leſs afflict God's Children while here; but at their Diſſolution *God will wipe away all Tears from their Eyes, and there ſhall be no more Death, neither Sorrow nor crying; neither ſhall there be any more Pain: for the former things are paſſed away.* Rev. 21. 4.

4. *At Death the living Chriſtian is freed not only from the burden of a ſinful, but alſo from the clog of an animal Body.* A *ſinful* Body is one thing, and an *animal* Body another. It would be equally falſe and irreligious for any to ſay that our Saviour had a *ſinful Body*, but it is certainly true that he had an *animal Body* like ours, liable to the like *natural* tho not *moral* Infirmities, which *Sin* hath brought into our Bodies.

Rom. 8. 3. Whence I conceive 'tis ſaid he *was ſent in the likeneſs* not only of Fleſh, but of *ſinful Fleſh*. The Bodies of Saints in the preſent ſtate, as they are to them an occaſion of much Sin, ſo when they are not ſo, they are a great *clog* and *hindrance*, and as it were a dead *weight*, to keep their aſpiring Souls from mounting *upwards* in Divine Contemplations and Communion with God. Tho the Fleſh in them be not ſo *ſtrong* as to prove a victorious *Enemy*, yet 'tis ſo *weak* as to prove a very untoward and ſluggiſh *Servant*, even when they are bleſs'd with a *willing Spirit* in religious Duties. Whence the beſt Saints have con-
Mat. 26. 41. tinual need not only to *watch*, but *pray* earneſtly for help from above, to ſecure them from being vanquiſhed by Temptation. But Death will bring them into that
1 Cor. 15. 43, 44, 49. bleſſed State wherein this *contemptible*, and, it may be, *deform'd* Body

Body ſhall be made *glorious* and *beautiful:* This *weak* and *frail* Body ſhall be made *vigorous* and *powerful*; this *Earthly* and *Terrene* Body ſhall be made *Heavenly* and *Celeſtial*; this *groſs* and *ſluggiſh* Body ſhall be made *pure* and *ſpiritual:* Then I conceive they will be enabled even literally to *mount up as with Eagles Wings, to run and not be weary, and walk and not faint.* Iſa. 40. 31.

In a word, our gracious Redeemer will *change this our vile Body, that it may be faſhioned like unto his glorious Body, according to the working whereby he is able even to ſubdue all things to himſelf.* Phil. 3. 21.

5. *Their Souls at and after Death ſhall be freed not only from all ſinful, but alſo from all afflictive Ignorance, and made perfect in the Knowledg of God, and his moſt excellent Works.* This Knowledg our Saviour calls *Life Eternal*, becauſe as a preſent ſanctified Knowledg of God is the only *way* to, ſo the Perfection Joh. 17. 3.

of this Knowledg is of the *Eſſence* of Eternal Life and Bleſſedneſs. The moſt illuminated Saints here have cauſe, with *Elihu*, to complain
Job 37.19. *we can't order* either our Thoughts and Conceptions, or our Words and Expreſſions aright, concerning him, by *reaſon of Darkneſs*. Indeed the moſt raiſed Notions and Conceptions, Words and Diſcourſes even of an *Apoſtle*, while here, concerning the *Myſteries* of God and Religion, are but like the *imperfect* and *confus'd Thoughts*, or *liſping* and *broken* Expreſſions of *Children*, compar'd with what they ſhall be in Heaven, whence ſpring ſo many different Apprehenſions amongſt the moſt ſincere Chriſtians; and hence they are too often vehemently contending and quarrelling like Children about thoſe abſtruſe Difficulties which are clearly apprehended by neither of the contending Parties. But Death will cauſe all *Scales* to fall from

from their Eyes, and remove every *Veil* from their Heart: then their preſent obſcure Knowledg ſhall vaniſh, as the twinkling Light of a *Candle* before the reſplendent Brightneſs of the *Sun*. All which is fully and clearly expreſſed by the Apoſtle to the *Corinthian* Chriſtians. Then will Saints be let into the full view of the *Myſteries* of Redemption, *which things the Angels deſire to look into:* Then will the infinitely wiſe and beautiful *Series* of Divine Providence be diſplay'd, which here appears many times, to the beſt, *dark* and *unaccountable* for want of their ſeeing it *from the beginning to the end:* Then ſhall the Depths of the Divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs in all God's Works appear to his Saints, who ſhall be the *wondring* and *delightful* Beholders thereof.

1 Cor. 13. 8—12.

1 Pet. i. 12.

Eccleſ. 3. 11.

6. Death will let them into the immediate beatifying Viſion, and full enjoyment of God and their bleſſed Re-

Redeemer: Then all that are
Mat. 5. 8. *pure in Heart* ſhall, according to our Saviour's Promiſe, be made compleatly *bleſſed by ſeeing God: They ſhall ſee his Face, and his*
Rev. 22. 4. *Name ſhall be written in their Forehead.* How and after what man-
Heb. 11. 27. ner Saints ſhall *ſee him who is inviſible*, what human Mind can now conceive? and how much leſs can my Tongue or Pen expreſs it? But in this the Holy Ghoſt is ex-
1 Joh. 3. 2. preſs; *We ſhall ſee him as he is*; and as the bleſſed Effect of this Viſion, *we ſhall be like him.* And well may this, according to the Apoſtle's deſign, raiſe admiring Thoughts and Meditations in our Minds concerning that *State*, and the Divine *Love* which gives us an Intereſt therein. 'Tis very unchriſtian to murmur and repine at the Death of our Godly Friends and Relations; which is only the accompliſhment of the *gracious Will* and *mediatory Requeſt* of our Savi-

Saviour: *Father* (ſaith he) *I will that they alſo whom thou haſt given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my Glory*, &c. O! what a deſirable thing muſt it be *to be for ever with the Lord*, and in the perpetual and uninterrupted fruition of him? To all ſuch who count it no leſs their *Privilege* than their *Duty* to behold his Glory *now*, tho it be only in the *Glaſs of Ordinances*; to all thoſe who often, in ſome good meaſure, experience the Pſalmiſt's Devotion, breathing forth with him, *My Soul thirſteth for God, for the living God; when ſhall I come to appear before God?* And again, *My Soul thirſteth for thee, to ſee thy Power and thy Glory, ſo as I have ſeen thee in the Sanctuary.* Joh. 17. 24. 1 Theſſ. 4. 17. Pſal. 42. 2. 63. 1, 2.

7. *Death will bring them into the moſt bleſſed and delightful Society.* They *now* enjoy not only a viſible Fellowſhip with Saints, but a ſweet and inviſible Communion with

with holy Angels, who delightfully perform that kind Office, in which they are imploy'd by our *common Head*, being by him
Heb. 1.14. made *all miniſtring Spirits, ſent forth to miniſter for them who ſhall be Heirs of Salvation.* But they ſhall aſcend from the *valley* of Death
Heb. 12. 22, 23. to the *top* of *Mount* Sion, *and to the City of the living God, the Heavenly* Jeruſalem, *and to an innumerable company of Angels*; — *and to the Spirits of juſt Men made perfect.* Made perfect! that is, freed from all thoſe defects in *Knowledg* and *Holineſs*, which here render the Society even of *Saints* ſometimes very *unpleaſant* and troubleſom. But O what a Felicity will it be to meet in that perfect State with many of our dear Friends and Relations! and it may be ſome of our Enemies too, perfectly reconciled to us! to enjoy intimate Society with *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*, and all

all the holy Patriarchs, Prophets, Apoſtles, and Martyrs; and, in a word, with all thoſe Noble and Excellent Saints that ever we read or heard of. You can't but from the Conſideration of theſe things, conclude with me in the

8. Place, *That Death will bring them into the moſt raviſhing Joys, and into the moſt pure and unmix'd Pleaſures.* The moſt refin'd Joys of this Life have a great *alloy*, and mixture of Sorrow: The moſt delighful *Pleaſures* are attended with *Pain*, and Uneaſineſs: The moſt happy Eſtate here is often obtain'd with *care*, kept with *fear*, and loſt with *trouble*: Honour and Greatneſs are commonly *uneaſy* to thoſe that *have* them, and *hated* and *envied* by thoſe that have them not. Liberal Education and Knowledg is one of the ſweeteſt Pleaſures and Delights of an *ingenuous* Mind; yet even this (if we may believe him

him who had the largeſt Experience of it) is not without its *Vanity* and *Vexation of Spirit.* Eccleſ. 1. 18. For *in much Wiſdom*, ſaith he, *is much Grief*; *and he that increaſeth Knowledg, increaſeth Sorrow.* Yea, the very Sweets and Delights of *Religion* are here exceedingly *dampt*; partly by the Conſciouſneſs of our great *Imperfection* therein, partly by *Melancholy*, and partly by the Malice of that *malignant* Spirit, who if he can't *hale* us with himſelf into *Hell*, will be ſure to make us go as *droopingly* as poſſible in our way to *Heaven.* But Death tranſmits holy Souls into the *immediate* Preſence of God, Pſal. 16. 11. where there is *fulneſs of Joy, and at whoſe right-hand there are Pleaſures for evermore.* Then all the *Doubts* of ſad and dejected, tho ſincere Souls, ſhall be chang'd into *full aſſurance*; all their *Darkneſs* into the moſt clear *Light*, their

their *Mournings* into *Melodies*, their *Sorrows* and *Sighs* into *Songs* of Praiſe and joyful *Halle-lujahs to him that ſits upon the Throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.* Rev. 19. 1. chap. 5. 13.

Laſtly, *All theſe Advantages will be eternal and everlaſting.* This is indeed but a Circumſtance, but 'tis ſuch a Circumſtance, without which all the Happineſs of Heaven it ſelf would be *imperfect:* Yea, the greater the *Felicity* is, the greater and more amazing would be the *damp* it would ſtrike upon the Spirits of thoſe who are in the *fruition* of it, to think; Alas, one day I muſt be depriv'd of all this! and tither relapſe into my former Miſeries, or elſe *ſink* into the *abyſs* of Nothingneſs. I believe there are few living Chriſtians but are ready to cry out with *Job*, under a ſenſe of the *Sinfulneſs* and *Miſerableneſs* of the pre-

Job 7. 16. preſent Life, *I would not live always.* But it is impoſſible any ſuch thought ſhould enter into the Mind of a glorified Saint: Where there is *fulneſs of Joy*, it can't but be an inconceivable Pleaſure to know it ſhall be *for evermore.* As the Felicities of Saints after Death are call'd *weights* of Glory, becauſe of the *Greatneſs* of them; ſo they are call'd *eternal weights*, becauſe of the *Durableneſs* and *Permanency* of them. O conſider then what a bleſſed thing it is to be regenerated, and born again; for ſuch are begotten to *an Inheritance*, not like the Inheritances of this World, *fa-*
1 Pet. 1. 3, 5. *ding* and *uncertain*, but *to an Inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reſerved in Heaven for you, who are kept by the Power of God thro Faith unto Salvation.*

Thus

Thus I have ſet before you a *little*, and I may, without any Rhetorical Flouriſh, ſay *but a little* of the *Advantages* which every ſincere Chriſtian ſhall gain by *Death*. I am confident whoever of you paſs thro the *dark valley and ſhadow of Death* into thoſe Regions of Light and Bleſſedneſs (and O that it may be the Portion of *every one* of you, who are my Hearers or Readers!) you will then *wonderingly* ſay of this your Gain by Death, as the Queen of *Sheba* of *Solomon*'s Wiſdom, *Behold, the half was not told me:* and the Glory and Felicity far *exceeds the Fame I heard.* 1 Kings 10. 7.

I now proceed to make ſome brief *Application* of the whole.

And among many very uſeful *Reflections*, which might be made upon this excellent Subject, I ſhall ſhut up my preſent Diſ-

courſe with theſe brief ones following.

1. Well may we hence infer *the Wiſdom of ſincere Religion.* If ſuch be the *end* of a truly Chriſtian Life, then, as the Scriptures *frequently*, ſo they moſt *fitly* repreſent ſincere Religion and Piety as *the trueſt Wiſdom.* Let even *Reaſon* impartially ſpeak whether it be not the trueſt Wiſdom to prefer the *Fountain of Living Waters, before broken Ciſterns that can hold no Water*; to prefer our *Souls*, in which we were made but little inferior to *Angels*, before our *Bodies*, in which we are little ſuperior to *Beaſts*; to give the Preference to *Heaven* above *Earth*, to *Eternity* above *Time*; to prefer *ſolid* and *endleſs* Joys and Felicities, before *empty* and *periſhing* Pleaſures: and then the reſult of its Determination muſt ſurely be, that the ſeriouſly *religious* Perſon is the only *wiſe* one. And, 2. 'Tis,

2. 'Tis, on the contrary, *the greateſt folly to neglect that Life, which alone will end in this gainful Death.* O what ſtupendous folly is it *to make light* of Chriſt! who muſt be our *Life*, if ever *we live indeed.* 'Tis great folly *in any meaſure* to neglect, but what unaccountable Madneſs is it *wholly* to *neglect this great Salvation!* Nor is it leſs folly for any to ſatisfy themſelves with the *Name*, without the *Life* of Chriſtianity, with a mere *Form*, without the *Power* of Godlineſs; for any to pleaſe themſelves becauſe they *eat in Chriſt's Preſence*, and ſit at his Table, tho they ſecretly *work Iniquity*, and indulge themſelves in worldly and fleſhly *Luſts.* Such have no *part or lot in this* whole *matter.* However ſuch Hypocrites may now flatter themſelves with a vain expectation of *Happineſs*, tho they are regardleſs of that ſincere *Holineſs* which is the Mat. 20. 2—5.

only *way* to it, this their Hope ſhall at laſt utterly *periſh*, and be
Job.8.14. ſuddenly *cut off, and their Truſt will be as a Spider's Web. Tho*
Iſa.44.20. *they feed upon Aſhes, and carry a Lie in their right-hand*, and are ſo *turn'd aſide by a deceived* and flattering *Heart*, as to entertain no ſerious thoughts of ſecuring and *delivering their Souls*; they ſhall at length be rouz'd out of this deluſory Dream. However they have lull'd their Conſciences aſleep, fancying themſelves ſpiritually rich, by reaſon of their Profeſſion and external Privileges, they ſhall not by all their empty Pleas be able to deceive their *all-knowing Judg*, nor appeaſe him who will then be *inexorable* to their moſt earneſt Intreaties; but, with wrathful Countenance,
Mat.7.23. he will *profeſs to them*, ſaying, *I never knew you*; *Depart from me ye that work Iniquity*. Death will not be to them any *Gain*, but the *end* of

of all their Delights, and the *beginning* of never-dying Sorrows and Woes.

3. Seeing none ſhall be admitted into *Heaven*, but *thoſe who have Chriſt for their Life*, as far as in us lies *we ſhould admit and retain no other in Chriſt's Church, which ought to be an Emblem of Heaven*, upon which account 'tis often call'd the *Kingdom of Heaven*. Such as make Chriſt's *Laws* the *Rule* of their Life, Chriſt's *Life* the *Pattern* of theirs, and make his *Glory* and *Intereſt* their ultimate *End* and *Deſign*; theſe are the only Perſons likely to be a *Reputation* to, or receive *benefit* by *Church Communion*. One *ſcandalous Sinner* being indulg'd in the Church, tho but a *little Leven*, yet *leveneth the whole lump*, that is, renders the whole Church *guilty* by their *abetting* of him. It is a horrid Reproach to our holy Religion to ſuffer any ſuch in *Chriſti-* 1 Cor. 5. 6.

an Communion; and much more is it ſo, if ſuch a one ſhould be a *magnified Teacher* in any Society of Chriſtians, as ſeveral of the *Greek Fathers* tell us, that *inceſtuous Fornicator* amongſt the *Corinthians* was, and that therefore they were *puffed up* from a conceit of his applauded Eloquence, and profound Learning, inſtead of *mourning* and being humbled; and *gloried* in their connivance at his Wickedneſs, inſtead of being *aſham'd* of it. *Look diligently*, ſaith the Apoſtle to the Chriſtian Church, *leſt any root of bitterneſs* be ſuffer'd to *ſpring up*, and be not rooted out; *leſt there be any Fornicator, or profane Perſon, and thereby many be defiled.*

Theodoret, Chryſoſtom, &c. Vid. *Poli* Synopſin in locum.

Ver. 2, 6.

Heb. 12. 15, 16.

4. *This ſhould perſwade all that have Chriſt for their Life, to love one another.* All ſuch are *born* * *from above*, and therefore are but *Strangers* and *Pilgrims* here below. The whole time of their conti-

Joh. 3. 3. * ἄνωθεν.

Heb. 11. 13.

continuance upon Earth, is but the *time of their ſojourning here:* They are *in the World* as well as others, but they are not *of it*, but are God's *elect* ones, and *peculiar Treaſure*, being, by their gracious Redeemer, *choſen out of the World*; and therefore *the World hates them*, and carries it ſtrangely towards them; and they likewiſe are, in the *Temper* of their *Hearts*, and in the *Deportment* of their *Lives*, alienated from the World: And becauſe they are *Strangers on Earth*, they are *no more Strangers and Foreigners* in Heaven, *but fellow Citizens with the Saints, and of the Houſhold of God.*

1 Pet. 1. 17.

Joh. 15. 19.

Eph. 2. 19.

As therefore *Natives* of the ſame Country, tho they may have little acquaintance and familiarity while at home, yet are much *endeared* in their mutual Affections by meeting together in a *ſtrange Land*, eſpecially if it be withal a *barbarous* Country, where

they are Partners in Sufferings and Hardſhips; ſo Chriſtians, conſidering they are *all fellow Travellers* thro a *waſt howling Wilderneſs* to the Celeſtial *Canaan*, ſhould take that excellent Counſel good
Gen. 45. 24. *Joſeph* gave his Brethren, *See that ye fall not out by the way.*

If *Chriſt be our Life*, then we
Epheſ. 4. 4. are all Members of *one Body*, and Partakers of *one Spirit*, and *call'd in one hope of our Calling*; we are then all Subjects and Diſciples of
Ver. 5. *one Lord*, and have, in reſpect of the ſaving Eſſentials, but *one Faith*, and are all the Children of *one God and Father*; all which are very *uniting* and *endearing* Conſiderations: But eſpecially, if, beſides all this, we are *viſibly* initiated into Chriſt's Church by that *one Baptiſm* which he inſtituted, different Apprehenſions about more diſputable Matters of Religion, ſhould not hinder us from
Ver. 3. *jointly* and ſtudiouſly *endeavouring*

to

to keep the moſt cloſe *Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.*

5. *This yields great Support when our Godly Friends and Relations are taken from us by the hand of Death:* We may then indeed have manifold cauſe to mourn, but *not to ſorrow as others who have no hope:* 1 Theſſ. 5. 13. ſeeing they are only *fallen aſleep in Jeſus*, they ſhall certainly *awake*, and be *for ever with the Lord.*

You, the ſurviving Relations of this our deceaſed Father, have cauſe to mourn for *your* Loſs, and the Church of Chriſt hath great cauſe to mourn for *hers*; but you have both great ground of Support, in that God continued him with you to *a good old Age*, and eſpecially in that his *hoary Head was a Crown of Glory*, being *found in the way of Righteouſneſs.* Prov. 16. 31. He liv'd near fourſcore years, and more than threeſcore of them were *ſolemnly*, and (we have juſt reaſon

reaſon to believe) *ſincerely* devoted to the Lord Jeſus in his Church: Yea, he had been, as I am certainly inform'd, about fifty four years a *Paſtor* or *Biſhop* under the great *Shepherd and Biſhop of Souls:* About fourteen years of which time he ſpent in *Sufferings*, *Bonds* and *Impriſonments* for his Lord, and in the Teſtimony of a good Conſcience.

He was indeed (in my opinion, and in the opinion of ſeveral other Chriſtians) ſomewhat too *ſtrait* and *narrow* in his Notions concerning the *terms of Church-Communion*; but even *this*, we have good reaſon to think, proceeded *from his ſincere Zeal, and tender reſpect to the Laws of the bleſſed Jeſus.* I know of no *diſhonour* or *blemiſh* he brought upon our holy Religion in his ſo long Profeſſion of it, but he was, I think, in general an *Ornament* and *Reputation* to it.

He

He bore his long Sickneſs and Pains with much *Patience* and Submiſſion to the Divine Will, and to the laſt rejoiced in *full aſſurance of hope:* He being *conſcious* that *Chriſt was his Life*, thereupon comfortably concluded that *Death would be his Gain.* We have good ground, through Grace, to believe him among thoſe bleſſed Ones *who died in the Lord, who reſt from their Labours, and their Works follow them:* And that he will hear that joyful Sentence, *Well done good and faithful Servant, Enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.* Where we leave him. And, Rev. 14. 13. Mat. 25. 21, &c.

In the laſt place, Let us labour to be *Followers of him*, ſo far as he *followed Chriſt*; and of all others *who through Faith and Patience inherit the Promiſes.* Let us give all diligence, and labour with a holy *Ambition*, to *grow in Grace* and Holineſs, and thereby Heb. 6. 12.

2 Pet. 1. 5—11. by *make our Calling and Election ſure*; that ſo we may have *an Entrance abundantly miniſtred to us into the everlaſting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.* This antient Miniſter of Chriſt now laying in the Duſt, liv'd indeed to be *full of days*; but who of you can promiſe your ſelves to be herein like him? *For what is your Life? it is even a Vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vaniſheth away.* O remember that the youngeſt and ſtrongeſt, and the moſt healthy *walk* but *in a vain ſhew*, and *at their beſt*, and * moſt eſtabliſh'd *State*, are altogether Vanity! Let us therefore earneſtly pray, and labour *ſo to number our days*, and conſider the great uncertainty of our Life, *that we may apply our Hearts to* Divine and Heavenly *Wiſdom.* We ſee *many* of our dear Friends and Relations ſuddenly *cut off as a Flower*, and *ſnatch'd*

James 4. 14.

Pſal. 39. 5, 6.

* נָצַב Stans vel ſtabilis.

Pſal. 90. 12.

ſnatch'd from us; let us bleſs God for the good hope we have, thro Grace, of their being *ready*; and let us pray and labour that we may be *alſo ready*, becauſe our Lord aſſures us, *he will come in ſuch an hour as we think not.* I cloſe all with the Apoſtle's concluding Exhortation and Deſire: *Therefore my beloved Brethren, be ye ſtedfaſt, unmovable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, foraſmuch as ye know that your Labour is not in vain in the Lord.* *And we deſire that every one of you do ſhew the ſame diligence, to the full aſſurance of hope unto*

Mat. 24. 44.

1 Cor. 15. 58.

Heb. 6. 11.

THE END.

Errat. Pag. 7. read ζῆν, and ζωὴ.

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